

Amendments to the Claims

1. (previously presented) Connecting means made in such a way that one said connecting means can be connected with the other connecting means in a positive fit in two directions that are perpendicular relative to each other, and wherein said one and other connecting means are formed by respective panel edges that have the same geometry, and each panel edge has a uniform cross-sectional portion bounded by top and bottom surfaces of the panels and a profiled cross-sectional portion extending from the uniform cross-sectional portion, each profiled portion having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another.

2. (cancelled)

3. (previously presented) Connecting means according to claim 1, wherein the profiled cross-sectional portions are configured so that they can be connected by lowering the one connecting means relative to the other connecting means and then pushing the connecting means towards each other in a direction perpendicular relative to the lowering motion.

4. (previously presented) Connecting means according to claim 1, comprising a separate locking means inserted between the panel edges after the panel edges have been connected together for locking the panel edges in such connected state.

5. (currently amended) Connecting means according to claim 4, wherein the ~~locking~~ connecting means is step-shaped or stair-shaped.

6. (previously presented) Connecting means according to claim 1, comprising a separate locking means which can be pushed into a channel formed between the panel edges, wherein at least one external dimension of the panel edges is greater than the corresponding internal dimension of the channel, so that the separate

locking means can be held in the channel by press fit and the separate locking means consists of a compressible material such as plastics.

7. (previously presented) Panels with connecting means provided laterally according to claim 1, which are formed in particular as laminate flooring panels comprising a base board and a decorative layer.

8. (previously presented) Panels of rectangular shape having lateral connecting elements provided along lateral edges of the panels, which lateral connecting elements are configured to be connected with each other with a positive fit in two directions that are perpendicular relative to each other, and longitudinal connecting elements provided along longitudinal edges of the panels, which longitudinal connecting elements are configured to be connected with each other by a turning motion, and wherein said lateral connecting elements are formed by respective panel edges that have the same geometry, and each panel edge has a uniform cross-sectional portion bounded by top and bottom surfaces of the panels and a profiled cross-sectional portion extending from the uniform cross-sectional portion, each profiled portion having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another.

9. (cancelled)

10. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 8, wherein the lateral connecting elements are configured so that they can be connected by lowering the one connecting element relative to the other connecting element and then pushing the connecting elements towards each other in a direction perpendicular relative to the lowering motion.

11. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 8, including a locking device insertable into a space between the lateral connecting elements when coupled together to lock the lateral connecting elements against separation.

12. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 11, wherein the locking device has a substantially rectangular cross-section.

13. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 8, wherein the lateral connecting elements are step-shaped.

14. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 8, including a separate locking device that can be pushed into a channel formed by the lateral connecting elements when coupled together, wherein at least one external dimension of the lateral connecting elements is greater than the corresponding internal dimension of the channel, so that the separate locking device can be held in the channel by press fit and the separate locking device and/or the lateral locking elements is/are made of a compressible material.

15. (previously presented) Panels according to claim 8, wherein panels are formed as laminate flooring panels including a base board and a decorative layer.

16. (previously presented) A panel of rectangular shape having first and second lateral connecting elements provided along respective first and second lateral edges of the panel, which first and second lateral connecting elements are configured to be connected respectively with like second and first lateral connecting elements of adjacent panels with a positive fit in two directions that are perpendicular relative to each other, and first and second longitudinal connecting elements provided along respective first and second longitudinal edges of the panel, which first and second longitudinal connecting elements are configured to be connected respectively with like second and first longitudinal connecting elements of adjacent panels by a turning motion, and wherein said first and second lateral connecting elements are formed by respective panel edges that have the same geometry, and each panel edge has a uniform cross-sectional portion bounded by top and bottom surfaces of the panels and a profiled cross-sectional portion extending from the uniform cross-sectional portion, each profiled portion having the same geometry but inverted with respect to one another.

17. (previously presented) Connecting means according to claim 4, wherein the separate locking means is a securing pin.